

FILENAME: T-ShorttRoger-2011-02-24

INTERVIEWEE(S): Roger Shortt (RS)

DATE INTERVIEWED: February 24, 2011

WHERE INTERVIEWED: Hotel Floyd, Floyd, Virginia, 24091

INTERVIEWER(S): Kayla Orr (KO), Rina VanBlerk (RvB), Dr. Melinda Wagner (MW), Kasey Farmer (KF), Kathleen Ingoldsby (KI)

TRANSCRIBERS: Floyd County High School class students

DATA CHECKER: Shayley Martin

AUDIO TOTAL LENGTH: 60:20

TRACK: 1005 4:45

RV: All right; today we have India Stuart as hospitality and also Kayla Albert. And then I am the director, Rina Van Blerk, and Kayla Orr will be the interviewer, and Shauna Surratt will be the track maker, and Kasey Farmer will be handling all of the lighting, and Caitlyn Akers will be the videographer, and Spencer Gravely will be photographer. Michaela Worrell will be the scanner; Nikki Grabar will be the field note taker and that's everything.

KO: Hello, this is—I am Kayla Orr. It is February 24, 2011. I am interviewing Mr. Shortt at the Hotel Floyd.

RS: Well, if you whisper, I can't hear you, but talk like you, and you, and you, and I can hear.

KO: Okay. So, what is your full name?

RS: Roger Shortt, just plain Roger Shortt.

RS: I'm retired now, but I just, I got a farm. I got a golf cart. [laughter] But I don't, well, I am retired, I have been retired from General Electric for twenty-four years and you might say I am on easy street. [laughter]

RS: When I went in the Army?

KO: Yes.

RS: Yes, that was October the 29<sup>th</sup>, 1943. The draft board let me finish high school, so about four or five months later I was drafted, eighteen years old. So, from there, I went to Fort Meade in Maryland, and went to East Boston, Massachusetts, and the 239<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Artillery. They had the anti-artillery set up from Maine to Florida; they figured that Germany was going to

attack America. So, they decided there wasn't, wasn't no need for it; so dismantled that, and sent us to Oklahoma in the Combat Engineers.

KO: And?

RS: Well, I took train and air to Oklahoma, and they sent us on a troop train to New York. I forgot how many months it was. Five or six, eight months, and got on a ship in New York, and I came in a [words not clear] road down here, but I done forgot what it was, and a convoy in 1944. Three thousand was on that ship—our ship. Troops were, and went in the convoy. They had destroyers on both sides and the ships—the main part of the ships was in the middle and we got to South Hampton, England. Thirteen days took us to cross the water, so they sent us—we went to England: a place called Fairfield about 80 miles out of London. More training [words unclear] training, training and they sent us to France --the ship to France, and we was there for a while, and they sent us to Germany during the war.

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RS: And the main occupation of what I did, I was classified as a rigger. But we did everything, repaired roads, repaired bridges, of course the big bridges all, bombed out, they had the temporary wooden bridges. Our job was to maintain those bridges, of course there was fighting on them. We wasn't in the fighting, I wasn't. A couple of them could tell you we weren't into fighting during the war so – [changes subject]. In Germany, it was a small town named Koblenz on the Rhine River, and it was a small town, and Germans had to move out of their houses while we occupied them. But we weren't allowed to sleep in the beds; we had our cots, about 5 or 6 to a room. Several houses there, and we had to – and while we were on the Rhine River we had to maintain those bridges but had temporary bridges cross the river.

But when the war was over, we, a couple of them could tell you, we built a pontoon bridge across the Rhine. That's two boats anchored together all the way across. They put treads on it for when Germany surrendered to bring all that heavy equipment back to France. But I may be getting ahead of myself now, I don't know. But anyways it was 1945, we trucked back to France, big station there, one of them named Camp Lucky Strike, Camp Chesterfield, Camp Camel, big areas with tents set up waiting on a ship convoy to go to Japan. So we was -- they didn't have the necessary ships and everything to get enough – go to Japan, so Japan surrendered, it was 1945. They dropped the big boy on them. So from there, we stayed in France, I don't know how many months I didn't document it, but anyway, we came back to the United States on one of the same sized ships, the three thousand going across, troops, same sized ships, they said drop your gear right here for the time being, we stayed 6 days on the deck. Six-thousand troops on that ship. Was only supposed to be 4 thousand on that ship but they put six

thousand and there was a lot of us on the deck and all of us, whatever they could find of people, to bring us back, but came back in six days, half the length of time as we went over. So we come back to the United States from New York and went to Kentucky, Fort Knox, Camp Campbell. I believe they call it Fort Campbell now; we stayed there until 1946 of April, where they shipped us back to Fort Lee, Maryland. That's where I was discharged at. You got any questions? Maybe I, I know I left a lot of things out, but that's the highlight of my story.

KO: So what was the earliest memory you had about the war?

RS: Earliest memory? I remember my dad had a radio, and he'd listened to it, back in '41, '42, '43. Well, I was drafted in '43, before the war I worked on a farm with my daddy, he kept us busy, we didn't get in no trouble, there was five of us, five of us all drafted in the Army, during World War II. One of them was in combat when he got killed; he was twenty-four years old.

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RS: You ask me some questions, I'll answer them; try to! [laughs]

KO: You said you were drafted?

RS: I was drafted when I was eighteen years-old, and I don't feel like the government owes me anything. They give me room and board and clothing, medicine, whatever I needed. I don't think they owe me anything. I did my little bit, and so—here I am now. [laughs]

KO: How did it affect the rest of your family whenever you left for war

RS: Well, he was—when he got killed he was already in the Army, and—I had a brother, he was in combat in the Pacific. He said the closest he ever got killed; they shot through his canteen. He thought it was blood running down his leg, but it was water running down his leg and he thought it was—he'd been shot. But he's—all of them dead now; I'm the only one alive.

KO: Yes. So, you said you went to multiple training camps? Different places?

RS: Different, yes. Training camps, yes.

KO: What was—what were they like?

RS: Well, it wasn't easy. We'd go on twenty-mile hikes before—with a field pack and your rifle. Some of them didn't make it, and they had a truck come along and pick them up. But I was used to it. I worked on the farm, and I didn't mind it. Some of them—there was guys living in the city, they just had to fall out, climb up in the truck. Couldn't take it.

KO: And how long did you say you were at those training camps?

RS: About three or four months, each one. Five months maybe at most each one, in Oklahoma and Kentucky and Massachusetts.